

AN
EPISTLE

OF
TENDER CAUTION AND COUNSEL,

FROM THE
MONTHLY MEETINGS OF FRIENDS

OF
PHILADELPHIA,

AFFECTIONATELY ADDRESSED

TO THE
MEMBERS OF OUR RELIGIOUS SOCIETY,
IN THE SAID CITY.

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DEAR FRIENDS,

UNDER a sense of duty, and a sincere concern for the preservation of our youth, and others, from the ensnaring temptations to vanity, injurious amusements, and licentiousness, daily abounding in this city, which we and many pious inhabitants behold with sorrow of heart; we are engaged to awaken your attention in general, to a serious and weighty consideration of the nature of our holy profession, and high calling in Christ Jesus our Lord; that by a close examination of our conduct and conversation,

tion, by the divine principle of light and grace (a measure of which is given to all men) and by the doctrine and precepts of the christian religion, we may be favoured to discern wherein any of us have deviated from the faith and practice of the primitive believers in Christ.

And as 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,' let us ever bear in mind the terms proposed by our dear Redeemer for our reconciliation, 'if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me,' Mat. xvi. 24. which fundamental doctrine he uniformly enforced, both by example and precept; appearing on earth in the form of a servant, for the sake of mankind; teaching us that rejecting the glory, honours, and unlawful pleasures of this unstable world, we ought ever to aspire after unfading glory in the mansions of immortal blessedness; going before to prepare a place, that where he is, there his redeemed children may be also: and his immediate disciples, whom he had called and chosen out of the world, were strengthened, and encouraged to follow their divine master; shewing forth by their self-denying lives, that they diligently sought after 'a better country, that is, an heavenly;' and that the same mind might dwell in them which was in Christ Jesus; aspiring after humility, meekness, gentleness, and all divine and heavenly affections, in opposition to the heathenish customs, vain diversions, and pastimes of the age in which they lived.

And it clearly appears, not only from ancient writers among themselves, but also by accounts



counts given by their opposers and persecutors, that the church, following Christ after the example of the apostles, was eminently preserved 'in
 ' simplicity, and godly sincerity, not with fleshly
 ' wisdom, but by the grace of God,' keeping a conscience void of offence; which continued to be a source of unspeakable rejoicing; and the Lord graciously favoured them with the gift of his divine spirit, their hearts being animated by
 ' that love which passeth understanding;' they were constrained faithfully to bear witness against the pride, corrupt manners, and ungodly amusements of the people among whom they lived; experiencing first in themselves, the efficacy of that redeeming power, which made them as weaned children, whereby that which was the life and rejoicing of such who lived in vain indulgences, was death to them, 'their life being hid with
 ' Christ in God;' they delighted in nothing that was ostentatious or luxurious, but having food and raiment, they had learned to be content; their habit being simple, and their deportment humble and modest, as best became their holy profession, evidencing the redeemed state of their minds. 'The christians of those days (says Cave
 ' in his account of them) did not study arts of
 ' splendor and gallantry; stately palaces, costly
 ' furniture, rich hangings, fine tables, curious
 ' beds, vessels of gold and silver, the very possession of which (as Clemens Alexandrinus speaks)
 ' creates envy. Nor were they more studious of
 ' pleasures and recreations abroad, than they were
 ' of fineness and bravery at home. They went
 ' not to public feasts, nor frequented the shews
 ' that were made for the disport and entertainment
 ' of

' of the people ; and this was so notorious, that
 ' the heathens charged it upon them as part of
 ' their crime.' Observe how he in Minutius
 Fœlix draws it up ; ' the Romans, says he, go-
 ' vern and enjoy the world, while *you* in the mean
 ' time are *careful* and *mopish*, abstaining even
 ' from lawful pleasures ; you visit not the *shews*,
 ' nor are present at the *pomps*, nor frequent the
 ' *public feasts* ; you abhor the *holy games*, the
 ' *sacrificial meats* and *drinks* ; *crown* not your heads
 ' with *garlands*, nor perfume your bodies with
 ' sweet odours : a ghastly, fearful, and miserable
 ' people : ' which by the time that Octavius
 the christian, comes to answer, he grants it all
 to be true, and tells him ' there was very good
 ' reason why they should abstain from their shews,
 ' pomps, and divertisements, at which they
 ' could not be present without great sin and shame,
 ' without affronting their modesty, and offering a
 ' distaste and horror to their minds.' See Cave's
 Primitive Christianity, part 2, chap. 2.

But unhappily, when the church experienced
 the sun-shine of worldly favour, under the smiles
 of princes and rulers, professing christians gradu-
 ally declined from their ancient purity of life,
 assimilated with the world, became ashamed of
 the cross of Christ, and in evident contradiction
 to the doctrine and precepts of the gospel, con-
 formed to the corrupting, debasing maxims, cus-
 toms, and vain fashions of the times ; the na-
 tural consequence whereof, was, that instead of
 the divine illumination, which was the glory and
 strength of the believers in the first ages, a night
 of gross darkness and apostacy overspread them
 in

in a general manner for several centuries, tho' still laying claim to the dignified character of Christ's church; the excellency of the gospel was, in this dark and bewildered state, thro' the inventions of men, much obscured, and superstition and idolatry introduced; notwithstanding which, witnesses were preserved from age to age, who, beholding the bondage and captivity into which multitudes were beguiled, lamented and mourned in secret, on account of the sorrowful depravity; and the Lord Almighty, in the riches of his mercy, caused the light again to dawn, and divers instruments were raised, who being faithful to the degree of divine light they had received, zealously laboured for a reformation to primitive purity, whose endeavours were made in some degree effectual; but the spirit of Antichrist had taken so deep root in the hearts of high professors, as mightily opposed the glorious work; yet the Lord's arm of mercy and power was stretched forth still, and at length in a marvellous manner gathered our forefathers from among various sects of professed christians; qualified and sent them forth in the demonstration of the spirit and power of the gospel, to call the people back to Christ the light of the world, and the life of men; the universal grace of God, inwardly revealed, teaching them, as it did the primitive believers, that 'denying ungodliness and worldly
' lusts, they should live soberly, righteously and
' godly in this present world;' and thus 'build-
' ing upon the foundation of the apostles and
' prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief
' corner stone,' they were constrained to publish
the glad tidings of the gospel through great
persecutions

persecutions and reproaches, faithfully declaring against the infidelity, pride, vain and seducing amusements, and various follies and abominations in which many, professing to be followers of a crucified Saviour, were indulging themselves, to the shame and disgrace of the christian name, and to their own condemnation; and after their patient suffering and humble, circum-spect walking, the Lord at length made way in the hearts of princes and rulers, for their enjoyment of more liberty of conscience, which being continued to the present time, it is incumbent on us, with all gratitude, religiously to improve to our own benefit and the real good of others, as it may truly be said, 'other men laboured, and 'ye have entered into their labours.' John iv. 38. But as we have increased in numbers and in worldly substance, snares and temptations have also multiplied, to the hurt of many, and great has been the concern and care of faithful watchmen, to give forth, from time to time, many admonitions, advices, and cautions, from a sense that numbers were in danger of being carried captive by the god of this world, through an imprudent extension of trade, covetousness, and an inordinate desire of wealth, splendor in living, costly apparel, expensive furniture, sumptuous tables, unnecessary equipages, and many superfluities of a similar kind; which proceeding from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and pride of life, are not, as the apostle John declares, of the Father, but of the world.

Now, dear friends! for the exciting all, and especially the inconsiderate and careless among
us,

us, to a sober and impartial scrutiny into our conduct, to determine how far we live consistent with the precepts of the gospel, and the example of those holy men of God, who have walked in the way to endless felicity in ages past, we have believed it right thus briefly to remind you of the happy effects of an unreserved obedience to the spirit of truth, which appeared among the first christians (which we wish you to read more at large for your own instruction) the declension, darkness, and spiritual death which ensued, when leaving the innocent simplicity of it, the professors became subject to the deluding spirit of the world, and the merciful goodness of the Almighty in stretching forth his hand to bring back that which was scattered; and continuing the free gift of his grace to direct us also in the same path of safety and peace.

We are sensible that many having their religious profession without cost or suffering, as a birthright, have been too little attentive to its import, or solicitous to understand and feel the divine efficacy of the principle of truth as it is in Jesus; we earnestly entreat and beseech such, that with a seriousness and diligence which the importance of the occasion requires, you may seek a nearer acquaintance with its preserving virtue, lest by remaining strangers thereto, you become an easy prey either to the secret or obvious stratagems of the seducer, and adversary of human happiness, and his emissaries, who by delusive representations, beguile the understanding, and lead the affections into captivity; and thus betrayed into a dark and bewildered state, the mind
is

is prepared to embrace pernicious and false doctrines, in direct opposition to the sacred precept; ' be ye not conformed to this world : ' an injunction, which notwithstanding its divine authority, and evident propriety, the votaries of that wisdom which is earthly and sensual, labour with unwearied diligence to expose to contempt; as if the innocence of life and rectitude of manners which the gospel teaches, were nothing more than an affected singularity, founded on the pride of self distinction; and that the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, were more consistent with the honour and felicity of God's rational creation: we, therefore, with much love and solicitude for your present and eternal well-being, tenderly admonish and caution the dear youth, who may be thus near the jaws of the devourer, that you attend to the secret convictions in your own minds, fervently praying to the Almighty for wisdom, who giveth liberally to all men; and he will enable you to shun the snares which are laid to draw you into the paths of destruction: associate not with those who make a scoff at piety and virtue, if you desire to be objects of the divine favour and blessing: be careful and diligent in the attendance of meetings appointed for that worship which is due from dependent beings to the bountiful author of all our mercies: devote not the fleeting moments of time, which are beyond estimation precious, and lent you for dignified purposes; the talents with which the Lord has entrusted and distinguished many of you; nor the worldly substance, of which you are accountable stewards, to the indulgence of yourselves in lying vanities, which vitiate the
mind

mind and impair its true health, by destroying its relish for, and hunger after enduring good. If captivated by the fancied comeliness and beauty of your persons, which are daily liable to be deformed by pains, withering disease, and death, ye exercise yourselves in devising and procuring fantastic decorations of effeminating dress, think ye it is no unrighteousness thus to disfigure and degrade God's workmanship; thus to cheat yourselves of the substantial comforts of an humble mind, of that immortal comeliness which proceeds, from the inward adorning of a meek and quiet spirit? If while the supreme controuler of events, who giveth increase to the labour of the husbandman, is awfully pleading with the nation, by his insect messenger which has been laying waste in part the hope of harvest, uttereth this instructive language, 'know your dependance, ye 'favoured people;' and numbers in different quarters are alarmed with apprehensions of scarcity and want; and many of our poor are reduced to great straits and necessities thro' the failure of employment, while a profusion of the precious fruit of the field, which would give nourishment to hundreds, is uselessly and wantonly bestowed in powdering the heads of ungrateful receivers: think ye there is no sin in this prostitution of the bounteous gifts of the Lord of all things? think ye it is becoming the professed followers of him who invariably teacheth to love mercy and walk humbly? it is rather evident that these are not 'using this world as not abusing it,' and their prayers will probably be as unavailing while in such practices, as the prayers of those whom the apostle reproveth, James iv. 3. 'Ye ask,

ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it on your lusts.' When people are thus indulging themselves in vanity and pride, they are in a very defenceless state of mind to withstand further deviations from that innocence and rectitude of life which the gospel enjoins; and it is less to be wondered at, that they become seduced and ensnared into those schools of vice and infidelity, the exhibitions and pernicious amusements of the theatre, which being of late introduced among us in this city, in open defiance and contempt of the laws of the land, and contrary to every religious and moral obligation, and attempts are making for their continuance; we are especially concerned to admonish and warn all our members against giving any encouragement or countenance to those vicious delusions, or others of the like nature, which are multiplied to the obvious injury of the morals of the people.

Men of real virtue and piety, of various religious denominations, have fully and justly set forth the evil tendency and consequence of those seducing diversions, and it has been the uniform practice of our society to bear testimony against them: read the sentiments of the wise and worthy William Penn on the subject, in his treatise entitled *No Cross no Crown*: he was well acquainted with the world, and experienced the emptiness of its vain honours and pleasures; in hope of your inspecting the book, we shall only select a few lines of it, where, remarking on the many evils produced by licentiousness of manners, he adds, 'but of all these wretched inventions, the *play houses*, like so many hellish seminaries,

minaries, do most perniciously conduce to these
 sad and miserable ends, where little besides fro-
 thy, wanton, if not directly obscene and profane
 humours are represented, which are of notorious
 ill consequences upon the minds of most, espe-
 cially the youth who frequent them.'

Be wise, ye parents, be faithful in love and duty
 to your tender offspring, suffer them not to suppose
 that ye secretly connive at their exposure in those
 seminaries of irreligion and vice: be not deceived,
 dear youth, by the specious, delusive language of
 those who may undertake to represent the ten-
 der solicitude of christian affection as the gloomy
 austerity of contracted minds: be not allured by
 any false glosses respecting the refinement of the
 theatre, which its promoters endeavour to repre-
 sent as a school of morality, whereby some who
 are well minded may be in danger of being en-
 snared: attend, we beseech you, to the disinterest-
 ed counsel of those who are your real friends,
 love you, and fervently seek your welfare and
 preservation from every temptation that may
 wound your inward peace, or bring a blemish on
 our holy profession; thus will you inherit durable
 riches and righteousness, in which you will find
 no disappointment, enjoy pleasures not to be
 repented of, and acquire honour which the world
 can neither give nor take from you.

But if any, after the honest labour of their
 painful concerned brethern, remain regardless
 of our affectionate advice and admonition, and
 persist in indulging themselves in wantonness and
 pride,

pride, the neglect of their religious duties, or secretly or openly mispending their time at theatrical amusements, taverns, vain shews and pastimes, by which the Lord, as also our holy profession, are dishonored; such among us (however weak and surrounded with human infirmities we may appear) who, with sincerity of heart, are desirous to be found living in conformity to the gospel of Christ, do believe it our duty to testify our disunion with their refractory conduct; and we solemnly warn you, that by thus departing from the ancient testimony and example of the primitive believers, our worthy predecessors, and the footsteps of the flock of the companions of Jesus, in every age, you are in imminent danger of being numbered with those, who, being ashamed of Christ and his words before men, he will also be ashamed of when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. Mark viii. 38.

And dearly beloved youth!

Being persuaded that there are among you divers who have chosen the fear of the Lord for your beginning in wisdom; we are thankful to him who in his unutterable love, has gathered and preserved you out of the vanities and wickedness of the times; keep humble and steadfast in your desires after the riches of a happy eternity; you are a comfort and rejoicing to those upon whom the labour of the present day more weightily rests; and our animating hope is, that if you continue watchful under the holy influence

ence of ' the law of the spirit of life in Christ
 ' Jesus, which sets free from the law of sin and
 ' death,' you will experience a growth in the
 truth, and become gradually qualified to appear
 on behalf of its cause; and instrumental in the
 Lord's hand for the promotion of his kingdom
 of righteousness and peace: although you may be
 attacked by the reproaches of the light, airy, and
 scornful, yet as you continue in the love of God,
 you will know a quiet habitation, where the ar-
 rows of the wicked fly in vain, the Lord ' will
 ' hide you in his pavilion, in the secret of his
 ' tabernacle will he hide you, and set your feet
 ' upon a rock,' Psalm xxvii. 5. and will ena-
 ble you to suffer reproaches for his sake; the
 hundred fold of peace will be given you in this
 world, and as you hold on to the end, life ever-
 lasting in that which is to come. The awful pe-
 riod of our dissolution with unremitted swiftness
 is hastening on all, when the libertines, and
 scoffers at seriousness and religion, will be com-
 pelled to acknowledge to their own condemnation,
 ' this was he whom we had some time in deri-
 ' sion, and a proverb of reproach; we fools ac-
 ' counted his life madness, and his end to be
 ' without honour. How is he numbered among
 ' the children of God, and his lot is among the
 ' saints.' Wisd. v. 3, 4, 5.

Finally, brethren, ' see then that ye walk cir-
 ' cumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeem-
 ' ing the time because the days are evil,' Eph.
 v. 15, 16. ' Now unto him that is able to keep
 ' you from falling, and to present you faultless
 ' before

‘ before the presence of his glory with exceeding
 ‘ joy; to the only wise God, our Saviour, be
 ‘ glory and majesty, dominion and power, both
 ‘ now and ever. Amen.’ Jude 24 and 25.

*Signed by appointment on behalf of the said
 meetings respectively held the 26th, 27th,
 and 29th days of the eighth month, 1788,
 by*

ISAAC ZANE,
 DAVID BACON,

}

for Philadel.

CHARLES WEST,
 WILLIAM SAVERY,

}

for Northern-
 District.

DANIEL BYRNES,
 JONATHAN EVANS, Jun.

}

for Southern-
 District.



